

To: Steering Committee

From: Ann Daley, Executive Director

Subject: Creating a Vision

Background. Four members of the Steering Committee met on September 19 to discuss the development of a vision statement for Washington Learns. The members stressed the need to think beyond incremental or marginal change and to embrace systemic reform.

The group developed a set of “core questions” to serve as a guide for discussion at the work session on October 10. The *revised* agenda for that meeting has set aside more than three hours for some unstructured dialogue among the members of the Steering Committee. You may want to use some of that time for discussion about creating a vision for Washington Learns.

What is a vision? Some thoughts....

- **A vision is transformational.** It provides a picture of what could be. It needs to be clear and compelling.
- **A vision is a catalyst.** It motivates people to move toward the dream.
- **A vision embraces paradox.** Many issues seem “either/or” in nature. Either we go for low cost or we go for high quality. Either we invest in the future or we focus on short-term goals. Good vision statements accept both sides of the paradox.
- **BHAG’s (“Big Hairy Audacious Goals”).** In *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, authors Collins and Porras conclude that the successful visionary companies are adept both at accepting paradox and at focusing attention on a big challenge.

How can a vision be articulated? Some options...

1. **A Vision Statement.** *Washington Learns* could adopt a vision statement for Washington’s education system – painting a compelling picture of what it needs to become. A vision statement can be a short, simple phrase, a sentence, or a longer statement. Some ideas for a vision statement are attached (see page 4).

2. **Critical questions.** Alternatively, *Washington Learns* could adopt a set of critical questions to guide our work. This approach has been used successfully in Kentucky to keep ongoing focus on post-secondary education reform. Those questions are:
  1. Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
  2. Is Kentucky postsecondary education affordable to its citizens?
  3. Do more Kentuckians have certificates and degrees?
  4. Are college graduates prepared for life and work in Kentucky?
  5. Are Kentucky's people, communities, and economy benefiting?

Similarly, Oregon has adopted a broad vision statement and a set of statements describing outcomes that would result from the vision. Here is the link

[http://egov.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB/os\\_4.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/DAS/OPB/os_4.shtml).

**Next steps.** The Steering Committee needs to determine if a vision statement is necessary or timely, and if so,

1. How it should be expressed: a vision statement or a set of critical questions?
2. The content of the statement or questions

If a draft vision statement (or set of questions) is developed by the Steering Committee, it will be shared with the Advisory Committees at their joint meeting on October 19. A final version will be included in the November interim report (to be reviewed and approved by you on November 14).

The Steering Committee members who met last month (Charley, Rosemary, Bob and Eric) developed a set of provocative questions designed to stimulate your creative thinking and discussion. These are set forth on the following page (page 3).

**In summary,** the vision (or set of critical questions) developed by the Steering Committee should be a **picture of the future that guides current behavior**. The gap between the current education system and the picture of the future education system is what produces creative energy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These are the “core questions” to guide the Steering Committee discussion:

1. What educational outcomes will serve the state in 2015? 2105?
  - a. What role for early learning?
  - b. What definition of Basic Education?
  - c. What goals for post-secondary educational attainment?
  - d. How do we eliminate the effects of poverty and ethnicity on educational outcomes?
2. How should learning be delivered?
  - a. In what time increments?
  - b. Using what methods/pedagogy?
  - c. By what organization(s)?
3. How should learning be evaluated?
  - a. High standards or “seat time?”
  - b. Who is or should be responsible and accountable for student success and for assisting students who don’t meet standards?
4. Should we think about “students” or “learners”?
5. How do we balance the trend to customized, individually tailored educational delivery with the need for social and civic functions provided by public schools?
6. Who are our competitors? Are we satisfied to be the best state in the nation or do we want to compete with the best in the world?
7. What is the appropriate state role in governance, accountability and finance for:
  - a. Early Learning (birth to age 5)
  - b. K-12 Education
  - c. Post-secondary education
  - d. Student transitions from one educational sector to the next?

## SOME IDEAS FOR STRUCTURING A VISION STATEMENT

- “World-class, learner-focused”
- “Washington’s education system will enable all learners to achieve their educational aspirations and will produce well-educated citizens who succeed in the global economy and contribute to civic vitality.”
- “To shape a successful tomorrow by investing in education today”
- “Educational opportunity will be seamless, affordable, and effective for learners of all ages, backgrounds and abilities”
- Our world-class education system will prepare *all* learners for success:
  - All children enter kindergarten ready to learn
  - All students graduate from high school prepared for higher education or workforce training
  - All learners enrolled in post-secondary programs complete them without remediation

## SOME IDEAS FOR STRUCTURING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

If the Steering Committee is interested in this approach, a review of the basic questions developed in Kentucky is suggested (see page 2). While Kentucky’s questions focus on post-secondary education, they are an excellent example of clear outcomes the state is striving to achieve. Below are two additional sample questions, submitted by the Washington Education Association, after a meeting with the Governor.

--Is Washington state investing at a level to ensure that all students have ample opportunities to learn each of the state four learning goals? (WEA)

--Is Washington state funding its schools at a level to ensure all students have ample opportunities to learn the state standards? (WEA)